

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR TRAVIS COUNTY EMPLOYEES REGARDING COVID-19**

***Updated 3/19/2020***

*The following provides an overview of common questions associated with the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) as it relates to travel, leave and telework. This situation is rapidly developing and modifications may come quickly. This information may be updated often accordingly.*

*At this time, all current policies pertaining to employee absences may continue to apply. Circumstances are being continuously monitored and the Commissioner's Court will determine if modifications need to be made. Departments are encouraged to be as flexible as is reasonable and appropriate in their application of the County's leave policies during this time. Please contact Travis County Human Resources Management Department and/or the Travis County Attorney's Office for advice on specific situations.*

### **What is Travis County doing to ensure that the employees keep health and safety in mind with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) issue?**

Travis County wants to ensure our employees and our community are provided the appropriate resources to be informed, safe, and healthy. We are ensuring that our policies, practices and procedures are updated and communicated timely so that we are able to ensure that our employees are able to deliver on the needs Travis County depends on us to deliver. Employees are provided a central source of information at Travis Central with internal and external resources as well as this FAQ to ensure that they have the most updated information to be informed, safe and healthy. Policies are reviewed regularly for any anticipated changes to leave, travel, and work operations relative to the latest COVID-19 information. This situation is rapidly evolving and employees are encouraged to exercise patience and remain in close communication with their manager and the county website for updates.

### **Will I need to use my leave accruals if I get sick from COVID-19?**

Travis County recognizes that employees need to have time away from work when they are ill, need to seek medical attention, or need to provide care for a family member who is ill or needs assistance in getting medical attention. Employees who are sick or think they may be sick, should stay home. Employees should use accrued sick leave in these instances, including instances of COVID-19. Employees who are unable to use accrued sick leave, may use other leave if available. We are currently evaluating allow those employees that need it to become negative with sick balances which will allow for better salary continuation. Your County Executive/Elected or Appointed Official will evaluate all forms of leave relevant to the circumstances.

### **Is COVID-19 considered a “serious health condition” under FMLA?**

You should treat COVID-19 as you would any other illness. It may be a qualifying event if it meets the serious health condition criteria (for example, in-patient hospitalization or complications resulting from the illness). For the most up to date information about eligibility and procedures to request FMLA, see the [Family Medical Leave Act information](#) on Travis Central.

### **What if the schools or dependent care closes due to related to COVID-19?**

In addition to sick leave, Travis County provides accrued leave for individuals to address personal issues. Employees who need leave to manage dependent care issues should work with their appropriate supervisors to balance the needs of their specific circumstance with Travis County’s business operations. Leave available for employees would include vacation, personal leave or any earned compensatory leave. Resources for dependent care in the area will be posted on Travis Central in the employee information area as they become available.

### **Will I be allowed to telework given that there are COVID-19 concerns?**

On March 16, 2020, Judge Sara Eckhardt issued an [order directing](#) Travis County Executives, Elected Officials, and Appointed Officials to implement temporary teleworking arrangements for employees whose job duties were conducive to working from home. Teleworking would allow Travis County employees to work from a remote location to perform County work without diminishing its quality or the level of service to the general public. This does not take the place of any existing arrangements with Elected Officials or Appointed Official departments and resources available should be considered. Employees should visit with their County Executive/Elected or Appointed official to discuss work suitability, equipment available, telework site requirements and employee eligibility requirements. See Subchapter G of Travis County’s policy [here](#). Your department/office may have a telework policy specific to them. If so, you should refer to that policy instead. At all times, telework will need to be approved by the County Executive/Elected or Appointed official. Employees needing training for telework can view the telework guide at <https://employees.traviscountytexas.gov/TC-telework-tips.pdf>, or visit the Learning area of SAP and search for the Telework course. For ITS support, contact the ITS Helpdesk at 512 854-9175.

### **What type of training/development is available for employees?**

The following on-line overview (no VPN connection required) at <https://bit.ly/2wa2eXW> will provide all of the options available at Travis County and outside for learning and development. Employees can also access the SAP Learning Management System from the external website at [traviscountytexas.gov](https://traviscountytexas.gov). Select Employees from the bottom of the screen and log into SAP and select SAP Employee Self-Service.

### **What if my role is not eligible to telework and modified operations impact me working?**

Travis County employees who are designated essential by the appropriate County Executive, Elected Official, or Appointed Official and perform essential duties for the Travis County community are expected to report to work as scheduled unless otherwise notified. Regular leave policies and

procedures should be followed for employees who are unable to report to work. If an employee is unable to telework and unable to perform their assigned work, departments and offices are encouraged to look for special assignments and development/training for the employee for continued work. If continued work is unavailable, County Executive/Elected and Appointed officials may use special county-approved designated leave coded as COVID-19 administrative leave.

**What if I am not sick but concerned to come to work and coming into contact with someone who is?**

You may request to use leave accruals or request telework options. Upon request, your manager will determine what is appropriate and reasonable based upon all the relevant factors.

**What happens if a manager observes an employee at work who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19?**

Managers, in consultation with the County Executive or designee, will use reasonable judgment when requesting employees be sent home with suspected COVID-19 symptoms which, according to the CDC website includes fever, cough, shortness of breath. The employee may be sent home and require a medical certification before the employee is allowed to return to work. In that event, the employee should use sick leave or other accruals. County Executives/Elected or Appointed Officials will also evaluate other forms of leave if necessary.

**What happens if I've come in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case or traveled into a CDC area to avoid?**

Employees who have come in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case or traveled into a CDC area listed as Level 2 or 3 risk assessed area should notify their appropriate supervisor via phone and self-quarantine for 14 days. Employees with symptoms should contact their medical provider for further instructions. Travis County health plan participants have various telemedicine options available and should call 512 854-0404 for further assistance. Leave options should be discussed with supervisors at that time.

**What current policies would apply to employee leave?**

[Travis County Code Chapter 10 –](#)

§ 10.002 Hours of Work

§ 10.037 Sick Leave

§ 10.036 Vacation Leave

§ 10.044 Personal Holidays

§ 10.042 Leave Without Pay

§ 10.038 Family Medical Leave

§ 10.055 – 10.060 Workers Compensation

§ 10.045 Leave With Pay

**What if the County closes due to health and safety concerns? Will I be required to use my leave?**

Appropriate leave designations and communications will be shared with employees at that time. Currently we are not anticipating any reasons to stop offering County services completely. Employees should visit with their County Executive/Elected/Officials for the latest information.

**Will I be provided Personal Protective Equipment if I interact with the public?**

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is most commonly used within critical environments such as healthcare and emergency response roles where individuals, typically patients, are known to have or suspected to have infections that represent an increased risk for contact transmission. Travis County wants to ensure that our resources are allocated to those roles that have a high probability for known exposure, which would be in health and emergency settings. Employees working with the general public outside of a health or emergency response setting should ensure that they clean their hands often, ensure frequently touched surfaces in the workplace are cleaned, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs.

**If I contract COVID-19 at work, is that a worker's compensation issue?**

Workers Compensation guidelines and policies are defined by both the county policies and the State of Texas guidelines. Our workers compensation procedures have very specific times for reporting, testing and evaluation prior to being determined if the injury is a work-related injury. As with all worker's compensation issues, the County would need to evaluate specific cases of work-related injuries within the Workers Compensation policies and guidelines before determining if an issue is work-related.

**What are options for me if I'm in need of medical care or evaluation?**

Travis County offers plan participants various options which includes virtual visits. Plan participants can connect with a doctor online anytime virtually via the computer or mobile device. Cost varies by plan and type of service. For medical, it is a \$10 copay for the EPO and PPO plan. Consumer Choice and HDHP cost is \$49 per visit and will apply to your deductible. If deductible met, Consumer Choice is \$9.80 copay and HDHP is \$4.90. There is also a Nurseline which is free. Call 877-365-7949 to access a registered nurse. The employee assistance program at 866-327-2400 can also be of assistance with behavioral and life management issues.

**Since there is so much uncertainty and things change every day, what is Travis County's position on travel?**

We know that employees may have business travel already booked, plans to book business travel, or may have their own personal travel plans. Our goal is to make sure that we are able to meet our business essential travel needs while still keeping in mind our employees' well-being. Therefore, we are encouraging all currently approved business travel be limited to essential operations needed to complete primary core functions of a role. Non-essential travel, such as conferences, training, meetings or similar activities should be evaluated, limited, cancelled or rescheduled. Management should visit with employees immediately on how best to ensure planned travel is in the best interest of the County and the employee. Every effort should be made to obtain refunds or credits for cancellations. Questions regarding Travis County policies on travel cancellations and eligible employees' reimbursements should be addressed with your County Executive/Elected or Appointed Official. You may review Travis County travel policies and guidelines at <http://traviscentral/travel>.

Given that we are restricting currently approved business travel and due to unknown future concerns with COVID-19, approval of non-essential business travel is suspended until further notice. Only your County Executive/Elected Appointed Official may approve any exceptions.

**What if I have other HR related questions that are not listed here? Who can I ask?**

Employees with HR-related questions regarding the COVID—19 should visit with their manager first. They will have the latest department information. Managers unable to assist employees will be able to partner with their designated HR department contact or their designated HRMD HR Services contact. Employees can also email [hrservices@traviscountytexas.gov](mailto:hrservices@traviscountytexas.gov) or call HR at (512) 854-9165.

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